No. 6.

The Duty of Parents to their Children.

Proverbs 22d. 6th.

Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

If there be any thing for which Parents can be supposed to be peculiarly anxious, it is the welfare of their Children: but, to obtain this end, they very often pursue it by means which disappoint their expectations and defeat their purposes. Their Children's welfare consists, some men think, in splendor of appearance or the accumulation of wealth——others, in dexterity of cunning and the arts of deceit.——Few, alas! are attentive to the cultivation of the moral temper——to eradicate the malignant passions which either flame out in acts of violence, or glow in the fullenness of resentment. Few consider it worth while to apply their leisure and knowledge towards rendering their children docile in their tempers and amiable in their manners.——And, fewer still, to sow the seeds of piety, and nurture the shoots of religion! It is incumbent on every parent——whatever be his situation——to cultivate in the minds of his Children, meekness, civility,

kindneſs, integrity towards man—reverence, piety, devotion, love towards God. Let theſe be the firſt impreſſions on their infant minds, and, in every ſucceſſive period of their lives, they will be influenced by them—they will live happy in the conſciouſneſs of diſcharging the duties of their ſtation—they will be eſteemed by ſociety as its moſt amiable and valuable members, and, when they receive the Summons to give an account of themſelves to God, they will die in his favor, be accepted by his mercy, and rewarded by his goodneſs.

Let me then beg your earneſt attention whilſt I urge upon you the care, the inſtruction, the welfare—the paternal care—the religious inſtruction—the immortal welfare of your Children: For tho' we may be unconcerned about ourſelves—tho' we may be ſo deſperate as to venture on the paſſage of life with a ſtormy ſea, or an unſkilful pilot—can we be ſo mercileſs, ſo unnatural as to expoſe our innocent Offſpring to the ſame danger? Can we launch them with unfeeling hearts on the ocean of life, only that they may be ſwallowed by its quickſands, or daſhed on its rocks?

In the first place, every parent, who neglects to acquaint his child with the principles of Christianity, commits him to the captivity of sin & the power of the Devil, a master who pays his servants in pangs & sorrows—& who compels them, with harsh severity, to work out their own destruction.

Further, Children have a natural demand on their Parents for both moral and religious Instruction. They have a thirst after knowledge, and in the gratification of it they generally appear to feel the most sensible pleasure.

Besides, if you neglect to instil principles of integrity and religion, the pernicious weeds of profligacy & vice will soon over-run the mind. Into what follies may not the thoughtless youth be betrayed when he is fortified neither by piety nor virtue? His natural propensity to Ill, seduced by allurements and encouraged by example, leads him far from the path of duty; and, his passions, bridled by no restraint, plunge him into excesses, out of which he knows not how to get extricated. Having broken the fetters of apprehension & "cast away the cords of duty from "him," he pursues his destructive course, till either the

ſword of Juſtice, or the rod of the Almighty ſtop his mad career. After a life, which has been a burden to himſelf and a peſt to the community, he goes down to the grave, either inſenſible to the miſery of his ſituation, or hardened with guilt, or diſtracted with terror.—So great is the neceſſity of "training up a child in the way he ſhould go, that when he is old he may not depart from it."

Let us now ſee the advantages ariſing from a careful and religious Education.

A dutiful and virtuous child, thro' his ready help and affectionate interpoſition, will remove many difficulties which might pierce with their ſharpneſs, or oppreſs with their weight. He will ſhew his Parents, when weakened by age, or boved down with infirmities, many expreſſions of kindneſs, dictated by nature, refined by education, and enforced by duty. He will cheerfully ſeize every opportunity of contributing to the eaſe and comfort of his revered parents: and will acknowledge, by every teſtimony of gratitude and demonſtration of honor, the vaſt debt, which, ſince his firſt entrance on the ſtage of life, has been perpetually increaſing.—The ſplendor of the great

the poſſeſſions of the wealthy, the knowledge of the learned —all theſe enviable diſtinctions united—are not to be compared with the ſolid pleaſure, the pure delight, the tranſporting rapture of the happy Parent. But, on the other hand, what relief, or comfort, or honor, can be expected from a perverſe and uninſtructed Child? The natural fruits of his barbarous Temper will be neglect, contempt, and upbraiding. Inſtead of thoſe little Attentions which their years may require, and their exceſsive indulgence has a right to demand, his behaviour is ſtrongly marked by unnatural inſolence and extreme brutality. Inſtead of being a comfort to their declining age, he contemplates their ſorrows with indifference, and hears their lamentations with diſdain.—The reflection, that his ſavage manners are owing chiefly to themſelves—to their miſplaced Indulgence & unpardonable neglect—pierces them through with many ſorrows. They long looked forward to the time of harveſt, when they might reap the full vintage of their anxious hopes, "but when they looked for grapes, "behold! only wild grapes."—Their care had been expreſsed, not ſo much in preparing the mind for right prin-

ciples, and implanting and nurturing them, as in pro-
tecting what were caft by the hand of accident, or the fub-
tilty of the enemy.

It may be aſked, perhaps, in what manner are
we to train up our Children, in order that both ourſelves &
them may reap the advantages of a good & right education?
In the firſt place, Children are to be taught that they are
members of a Community, and, that on the good conduct
of the Individuals which compoſe it, depend the happineſs
and proſperity both of ſociety and themſelves. The prin-
ciples of juſtice, integrity, ſubmiſſion, reſpect, charity, ten-
derneſs, forbearance, and all the virtues which adorn the
human mind, are to be early impreſsed. The chara-
ters they are likely to ſuſtain—the comforts they are to feel
within themſelves, reſulting from propriety of behaviour &
eminence of merit—the eſteem derived from the world by the
exercise of kindneſs and humanity:—by theſe arguments,
and arguments like theſe, every Parent ſhould inceſsantly
urge his Child to the higheſt degrees of excellence.

But it is incumbent on the Chriſtian Parent to ac-
quaint his Children with the nature & deſign of Chriſti-

anity—how it conduces both to our present and future In=terests—and, on the contrary, if it be not both believed & practised, the severe punishment awaiting incredulity of mind, and impiety of life. To inculcate this more ef=fectually, he will naturally teach them to offer up their prayers and praises to Almighty=God with solemnity and devotion—he will bring them early "to the Courts of the "Lord's=house, to worship the Lord in the great congrega="tion"—he will teach them the respect due to the solemn day dedicated to the Lord—how it should be religiously dedicated to his service, and not sacrilegiously appropri=ated to their own.—To enforce with more efficacy these religious duties, he will instruct his Children as well in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as in the know=ledge of God the Father—"for this is life eternal to "know Thee the only true God, & Jesus Christ whom thou "hast sent." On all Parents this is indispensably in=cumbent. Shall the Almighty be disarmed of his Ven=geance—shall our grand Adversary, the Devil, be de=prived of his malicious power to work our ruin—shall the gates of life and immortality be opened to us through

his propitiatory sacrifice—shall these blessings be conferred on us sinful men, and we keep our Children in ignorance of them? or shall we refuse taking all posible pains to give them clear and distinct conceptions concerning them? Observe the treatment of an infant Heir to large possessions:—no sooner do the first dawnings of his mind appear than he is made acquainted with the consequence and distinctions he is one day to possess—he is taught all the accomplishments education can beston, in order to give Dignity to his Sentiments and Refinement to his Manners.—Our life is only "like a Tale that "is told, or as a Vapor which appeareth for a little time "and then vanisheth away."—And if so short a life claim such wonderful Attention—what ought to be shewed towards the heir of Immortality—and such is every son and daughter of Adam—to him—who is to live at his departure hence, in a state of eternal happiness or eternal misery—in a state, which is never to cease—never to have an end? Let every parent seriously ask himself whether he has paid the studious attention to the welfare of his children its importance demands of him? Has he

taught them their duty to God and man?—Has he instructed them in the knowledge of Christianity with the same earnestness of endeavor and application of mind he has taught them the several Callings by which they are to earn their bread, or cultivated the several accomplishments by which they are to adorn their station?—Few Parents, I fear, can lay their hands on their hearts, and say they have done their children this common Justice.—Would to God I could prevail on every one who hears me to take this into his most frequent and serious consideration! Would to God I could prevail on you "diligently to instruct your Children in the Holy "Scriptures—that you would speak of them when you sit "in the house, when you walk by the way, when you lie "down, and when you rise up!"—Christianity, cordially embraced and clearly understood, would shine with meridian lustre—"your sons"—instructed in its doctrines—"would grow up as the young plants, and your "daughters"—educated in its precepts, "as the polished "corners of the temple."—

But whilst you inculcate the doctrines, you will

not be inattentive to the evidences of the Gospel. You will lay a foundation, sure and stable, on which may be erected a superstructure, not to be undermined by the floods of temptation, nor shaken by the tempests of reproach. "Every Christian should be enabled to give to every one "that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him." Would not a man be justly ashamed of knowing so little of his Trade by which he supports his Family, as to be unable to answer the several questions which curiosity might propose, or ingenuity suggest? And shall a Christian be so ignorant of his Charter of Salvation, as not to be able to evince its Truth and demonstrate its Original?

If there be any who is not yet convinced of the necessity, or is not yet prevailed on to give his children a really religious Education, with such an one, allow me to expostulate freely.—If he be rich, how can he reconcile two things so contradictory in their nature, as to be sollicitous to make them wealthy or great in this life, which, at best, is short, and always uncertain, and so barbarous as to neglect providing for a future life which continues for ever? Let him look upon his children with the eye of pa-

rental Fondneſs—let all his Tenderneſs, his Senſibility, his Underſtanding be exerciſed on the occaſion—then let him ask himſelf—if his opinions about Religion should prove wrong, and his children, through the Influence of his opinions, ſhould be deprived of the Bleſsings to which the practice of it intitles us, what will Honor, & Wealth, & Succeſs avail? It is not about a Bargain, a Title, or an Eſtate we are diſputing—No—it is—whether your Children, through your attention or neglect, ſhall be immortally happy or eternally miſerable?

If he be poor, and incapable of ſupporting his Children with comfort here, will he not naturally ſtrive to bequeath them an Inheritance in another life, which will ſo amply compenſate for the want of one in this?—Have the ſatisfaction, I beſeech you, of reflecting, that after all the Troubles your Poverty has entailed on them here, they will be happy, thro' your means, hereafter.—

In the midſt of abundance a man may be poor & miſerable—guard the fortune you leave him with the utmoſt ſecurity of law—tho, in ſome caſes, you preſerve it to your Family—you cannot make your Child proſperous

and happy.—But give him a religious Education—inſtil principles of Integrity and Piety in his early days, and when he goes out into the world, he will, in general, be actuated by them.—Or, if he should, unhappily, deviate from his duty—if "he should walk in the counſel "of the ungodly, and ſtand in the way of ſinners"—unleſs he ſhould be cut off in the midſt of his Iniquities, he will amend his life, and will, again, adorn the profeſſion he has ſo ſhamefully diſgraced.—For ſuch is the power of Religion on the ſoul—if its Impreſſions be made in the early part of life—it is not poſſible entirely to efface them.—Religion will have her Intervals of Reflection—Reflection produces pious Reſolutions—and pious Reſolutions beget amendment. So true is the obſervation of Solomon—Train up a child, &c.

Let me juſt obſerve that ſucceſs, in every family, will depend on the religious Conduct of both Parents—let them be juſt & honeſt in all their actions—let them ſhew the utmoſt Reverence for the truth—let them avoid not merely the commiſſion—but the approbation, of all profaneneſs and impiety— let them be regular in offer-

ing up their family and private Devotions—let them devoutly observe the day dedicated to the Lord—let them attend the most solemn of all Ordinances—the Commemoration of the death of our Redeemer in the holy Sacrament—these duties, exemplified in their own conduct, attended with innocent cheerfulness, & recommended by patience, tenderness, and encouragement, will enforce their Instructions—they will communicate their Influence insensibly to their Children, and excite in them a noble Emulation of imitating their Parents "in whatsoever "things are honest, just, and of good report."—Those "things which their Children have learned, & received, "& seen in their Parents, they will do."—The Duty of the Parents, and the Obedience of the Children will receive one and the same Reward—"the God of Peace "will be with them" both!

That all Parents may feel this real, this unequivocal Affection towards their Children, and all Children, in consequence, be trained up in the way wherein they should go, do Thou, Holy Jesus, whose Love for the innocent and helpless was always most conspicuous, shed

upon them the influences of thy Grace & heavenly Benediction—May the seed sown—the religious Instruction of all Masters, Parents, and Teachers—produce sixty and an hundred fold—that when the harvest—the day of Judgment—shall come—and the Reapers—the Angels of God—shall be employed to separate the Wheat from the Tares—the Righteous from the Wicked—every Parent may thus thankfully address himself to God—Lo! here I am, and the Children which Thou hast given me; & their Offspring re-echo in joyful Acclamations—Blessed be he that begat, and her that bare me, and blessed be the Lord for ever, Amen & Amen!

Theoph^{s}. J. St. John.

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